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AUTHOR	Ediger, Marlow
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ABSTRACT

The role of the supervisor in improving the reading curriculum is more demanding than formerly, even as the teaching profession needs to make do with what there is in the public schools, be it class size, equipment, materials of instruction, or a hostile learning environment. The supervisor needs to look at two dimensions: personal lives of teachers and their professional growth in reading instruction. Reading teachers should make their needs known to the supervisor to strengthen the classroom environment, and conversely, the supervisor needs to be a good listener to problems in reading instruction as expressed by teachers. Reading supervisors need to be approachable; they should welcome teachers to identify reading problems faced in the classroom. The reading supervisor must realize that the community has expectations that pupils will become better readers. Parents should have the opportunity to meet with both teacher and supervisor. The supervisor may be chairperson and organizer of inservice education, workshops, and faculty meetings involving reading instruction. Supervisors and reading teachers need to guide students in developing an attitude of respect toward themselves and others, in an atmosphere of democracy. Students could make suggestions as to what to emphasize and study. The supervisor needs to be well versed in different kinds of software as well as in criteria to use in evaluating these products. (Contains 11 references.) (NKA)

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Supervision in the Reading Curriculum.

by Marlow Ediger

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SUPERVISION IN THE READING CURRICULUM

The role of the supervisor in improving the reading curriculum is more demanding than formerly. The supervisor needs to be well versed in trends and issues in the teaching of reading. He/she must be highly knowledgeable about measurement instruments and devises used in determining pupil progress in reading. The lay public, and specifically the business world, is wanting higher standards of achievement from pupils. Criticisms toward education and the achievement of pupils continue to abound, right or wrong. I do not believe that public school education has any more weaknesses than the medical or legal profession. People I talk to mention the weaknesses of diagnosis and prescription procedures of medical doctors, and these are not complimentary in many cases. The legal profession can easily be criticized for wrong outcomes in court cases and frivolous lawsuits.

The teaching profession needs to make do with what there is in the public schools, be it class size, equipment, materials of instruction, and a hostile learning environment in the school setting. Whatever the preset situation in any profession, improvements need to be made. We as teachers need to change teaching procedures to something better than exists presently so that pupils become better readers and increase achievement in all curriculum areas. A feeling of professionalism needs to be in evidence in the school setting. The supervisor of instruction must assist with instructional problems in the classroom. A quality environment for reading instruction needs to be in the offing (See Contrell, 1999).

The Reading Supervisor and Human Relations

I doubt very much if changes and improvement in reading instruction can come about unless there is good human relations between teachers and the supervisor. Quality human relations involves a feeling and an attitude of trust among coworkers. Trust is built up over a period of time. Since assistance and help given to teachers will go a long way in fostering good human relations, a caring supervisor needs to be in evidence. Here, care is shown for the welfare of teachers as well as for pupils. There are at least two dimensions involved in the concept of care and caring. The reading supervisor needs to realize that teachers have personal lives to live with its many attending tasks. Then too, there are the institutional demands of the school that should receive adequate attention. Too many inservice education programs might well slight time from the personal lives of teachers. Too little time for teacher growth and development may hinder quality instruction to come about.

The supervisor then needs to look at both dimensions--the personal lives of teachers and their professional growth in reading instruction--needing adequate stress. I will now move in he direction of emphasizing what is necessary as broad guidelines for the personal dimension of living for teachers. Here, teachers need to take care of personal business, health care, children in the home setting, and family matters. A quality life in the home setting meets safety and security needs of individuals. A caring home situation where members are concerned for each other is important and will carry over into the professional arena of the school. I doubt very much if the personal and professional lives of teachers and supervisors can be separated. The reading supervisor needs to realize, however, that the personal relations of individuals in the home setting is important and not to place strain upon concerns and wants of teachers. Teachers are human beings and like to be recognized for achievement and growth in personal and professional living. Thus, a teacher who receives an award from a civic or religious institution should receive recognition from faculty members and from the reading supervisor. Meeting recognition needs is of utmost importance.

I will now focus upon the professional needs of reading teachers. Reading teachers should make their needs known to the supervisor in order to strengthen the classroom environment. What if discipline problems in the classroom hinder the teacher from doing a good job of teaching? A teacher in most cases cannot select which pupils will be in his/her classroom. A well known teacher known for quality teaching was ready to quit in the middle of the school year due to two pupils who kept the entire classroom in an uproar. She mentioned to me all the approaches that were tried to discipline pupils in a humane manner. These included assertive discipline, reinforcement theory, extrinsic motivation approaches, classical conditioning, and classroom attempts at problem solving of discipline problems. She achieved the greatest success by varying learning opportunities for pupils, establishing set before the major parts of the lesson were to be presented, and attempting to provide for individual differences. However, in degrees, the problem was not solved to the extent desired so that all pupils in the classroom could achieve more optimally in reading. Much research and experimentation will need to be done so that individuals who reveal discipline problems can have their energies channeled into positive directions in reading. I recommend here that reading teachers and supervisors study diverse procedures pertaining to disciplining pupils and use that approach which meets individual needs.

Second, the supervisor needs to be a good listener to problems in reading instruction as expressed by teachers. A reading teacher may express a problem of a pupil calling words read orally and yet not comprehending content read. I taught a pupil fitting this description in my early years as an elementary school teacher. This pupil, called Larry

and not his real name, read very loudly and haltingly so that pupils in another classroom across the hallway could almost hear him. Larry was very tense when reading aloud and knew he was struggling along with his slow methodical way of reading without comprehending what was read. I first had to have Larry realize that merely being able to read aloud does not make for knowing what has been read. I asked Larry again and again after he had read both silently and aloud which ideas he had gotten from the reading activity. It took time for Lorry to realize that he had to say in his own words what had been read. Once he understood this, the next task was to have Larry obtain meaning from reading that which was completed. Merely understanding that he had to say aloud ideas gotten from reading was one item of Larry's achievement as compared to actually doing it. There were numerous word recognition problems that hindered comprehension of content. I had Larry keep a special notebook on words listed that he did not know how to pronounce. Larry was given practice on saying these word correctly by classmates and by myself. The extra help made it possible that he recognized about fifty per cent of the words from the list and used approximately one-half of these in oral and silent reading correctly. At the beginning, Larry would recognize these listed words in his notebook, but not in the basal reader. With extra help, Larry identified these same words in the basal reader. The process was slow but progress was being made. The problem was identified in Larry's case and solutions tried out. Seemingly, Larry made slow progress throughout the remainder of the school year. After the school year ended, Larry and his family moved away and I lost contact with him. I have discussed Larry's problem with reading supervisors in the public schools, and most indicate that word calling but not comprehending content read is a perennial problem among selected pupils. Reading supervisors need to be able identify and assist in solving problems pertaining to pupil reading.

Third, reading supervisors need to be approachable. Teachers need to feel that they can truly go to the supervisor and talk over problems experienced in the classroom. There is then an open door to the supervisor's office. The reading supervisor welcomes teachers to identify reading problems faced in the classroom. He/she is very willing to come to the classroom to help with problems in reading. A kind, knowledgeable, and caring reading supervisor is wanted by teachers to assist in securing better methods of teaching and learning. If teachers avoid meeting the supervisor, valuable contacts are lost and assistance is not available.

Fourth, the reading supervisor realizes that the community has expectations in that pupils become better readers. Parents should have opportunities to meet with both teacher and supervisor (Burns, Roe, and Ross, 1996). Too frequently, parents meet with the child's teacher in parent/teacher conferences, but not with the reading supervisor. The

reading supervisor needs to realize that parents have valuable information to present of their offspring which will truly be of value to improve reading instruction. The reading supervisor, the teacher, and parents need to work together for the good of the child.

Fifth, the reading supervisor may be chairperson and organizer of inservice education, workshops, and faculty meetings involving reading instruction. Here, the supervisor recognizes the responsibilities of having inservice education that is goal centered. There are definite approaches and experiences for participants to attain the stated goals of inservice education in reading instruction. Ultimately, it needs to be evaluated if the goals have been met. The reading supervisor needs to be a leader in guiding teachers to change from what is to what should be in reading instruction.

The reading supervisor then is a good organizer of people to further the goals of the institution of quality reading instruction, in particular, within the public school system. Thus, he/she is a people centered person and yet highly knowledgeable about how to improve teaching and learning in reading. These areas are two sides of the same coin. Improving reading instruction within the framework of good human relations are musts! The chances are little will get done unless human relations and knowledge/skills in reading are in evidence.

Democracy within the Reading Curriculum

The reading supervisor needs to be a strong believer in democracy as a way of life in school and in society, with an integration between the two domains. Supervisors and teachers of reading need to guide pupils in developing an attitude of respect toward themselves and others. Discussions pertaining to comprehension of content from reading assignments and voluntary reading will fare better if pupils accept each other as persons having much intrinsic worth. Discipline problems will then be more minimal and learning becomes increasingly positive. People are unique and possess differences in interests, talents, and abilities, and yet there are common needs possessed such as physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, and self actualization (See Maslow, 1954). Likenesses and differences need to be accepted by others. Individuals need to be accepted regardless of race, creed, and religious beliefs. Discrimination among individuals has no place in a democratic society. The reading curriculum then must possess a multicultural emphasis. Subject matter, content, and ideas read need to emphasize respect for all. Each cultural group should have its fair share of emphasis in terms of minority participation in pictures, study prints, and print discourse concepts and generalizations within materials read. Being left out of literary content hinders pupils from identifying with and being a part of the ongoing learning opportunities. Basal readers, library books, and other reading materials must stress a multicultural

emphasis. Pupils with diverse perceptions and beliefs must be included in the literature curriculum.

Pupils should have ample opportunities to work with others of different cultures when participating in discussions and collaborative endeavors. Committee work to discuss content read in an ongoing lesson or unit of study must follow tenets of democracy in order that quality human interactions occur. Each pupil needs to participate actively. All should participate in an engaged plan of participation. No one should be minimized or ridiculed for ideas presented. Content presented needs to circulate among committee members so that main ideas and conclusions are increasingly valid in the discussion. Thus, discussions pertaining to characterization, setting, sequence, plot, theme, and point of view need a depth emphasis during the ongoing discussion. Sharing of ideas is one way of stressing depth probing of the author's writings. Too frequently, survey approaches with a single correct response to a question is stressed. However, meaningful learnings in reading emphasize critical and creative thing procedures. With critical thought, ideas presented are compared and contrasted as pupils contribute to the discussion. Creative thinking emphasizes learners coming up with unique ways of thinking about subject matter, such as in brain storming. There are excellent ideas that can come from pupils with an environment that encourages originality in thinking. Thus, pupils may brain storm descriptions pertaining to the main character in the story or reading selection. Here, pupils might realize diversity of thinking on the part of participants. Learners might also wish to brain storm the many alternate kinds of main characters that would fit within the content read. A further activity involving brain storming might well stress problem solving. In the problem presented in the story, what other ways may have been used to solve the problem(s) than those actually used? Problem solving as a skill is important now as well as in the future for all pupils. Ideas presented during the discussion need to be respected and new ideas generated as the endeavor continues.

Democratic living and learning in the reading curriculum might well provide pupils with a set of values to consider in adopting. Content read presents a variety of value laden materials. Learners seemingly are attempting to obtain values to live by. Most of these values are very transitory. New values being considered may come from a literature based curriculum (See Templeton, 1997). Thus, if pupils are considering point of view from a reading selection, how does this differ from their very own thinking? A critical analysis may assist pupils to compare and contrast their values with that given in the point of view. Each person needs to ultimately develop a philosophy of life pertaining to the following dilemmas with its pros and cons: capitol punishment, abortion, competition versus cooperation, collectivism versus personal endeavors in society and to what degree, amount of aid provided by the

government to the poor, and the role of government in society as well as its right to tax people adequately for roads, bridges, and other public works.

The supervisor has an important task then in guiding teachers to implement democracy as a vital tenet in the teaching of reading. Pupils will tend to achieve at a higher level if a relaxed classroom environment is in the offing. Perhaps, the heart of democracy is teacher/pupil planning of the reading curriculum. Certainly, pupils should have a voice in selecting objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation procedures in ongoing lessons and units of study. How can teacher/pupil planning be implemented in reading instruction? Let us go back to discussing structural ideas in the ongoing literature curriculum. If pupils are studying the setting of a reading selection, pupils could make suggestions as to what they would like to emphasize and study. The following are possibilities that pupils may wish to pursue.

1. provide a different setting than the one stated by the author.
2. elaborate on the setting provided by the author.
3. give as many alternative settings as possible within a given time period.
4. develop a setting whereby an earlier century is being emphasized.
5. state a setting that that provides severe conflict with the main characters of the reading selection (Ediger, 1997).

Tenets of democracy in the teaching of reading do not stress

1. Pupils doing as they choose. This would amount to anarchy. Rather, pupils are working on tasks that are relevant to the objectives of instruction in the classroom and for the school. Continuing with structural ideas in literature, pupils might plan with the teacher a different plot for the reading selection being considered.
2. Little direction or guidance given by the teacher. Instead, the role of the teacher is important in democratic settings in that he/she is a leader, a guide, and encourages pupils to achieve and learn. The teacher then has an active role in obtaining pupils' interests, purposes, and meet needs of learners.
3. A highly competitive environment for learning. Democracy as a way of life stresses collaborative endeavors by pupils. Interpersonal endeavors mean that pupils need to plan together, work in the direction of achieving the plans, as well as evaluate the quality of the involved processes and products. For example, in reading a given selection, pupils in a committee, with teacher assistance, may develop a different point of view, other than that presented by the author. Achieving this goal requires knowledge of the literary selection, making comparisons when diverse points of view are presented by pupils, and appraising the worth of each. Learning can be fascinating and exciting when these

comparisons are being made. Competitive endeavors may be contrasted with intrapersonal achievements whereby the learner works on a project independently. The achievement here stresses the involved pupil comparing his/her present level of progress with that of an earlier time. Both collaborative and intrapersonal endeavors need to be emphasized.

4. Rigid rules and standards to follow. In contrast, democracy in the classroom emphasizes flexible standards that are reasonable and achievable by pupils. It is good procedure to involve pupils in planning these standards or rules of behavior as well as in the evaluation process. Evaluation is always done in terms of stated objectives which are feasible for pupils to attain. For example, if pupils are to locate the main idea of a story, it is possible, after instruction, for pupils to do so. Or, if pupils are to locate supporting ideas for the main idea, learners possess the necessary prerequisite skills to achieve this objective.

5. Pupils seated in rows and columns, facing the teacher. In comparison, flexible approaches to grouping pupils should be in evidence. There may be a few opportunities whereby pupils are seated in rows and columns, such as in large group instruction in team teaching. Other procedures too need to be emphasized such as pupils seated in a circle for small group discussion. Or, pupils working in carols for individual endeavors need to be emphasized. I observed a fascinating discussion on pupils working collaboratively in arranging sentence strip sequentially for a story. The discussion and debate was excellent as well as challenging. Each pupil on the committee listened intently and was engaged in the ongoing task.

6. Limits content read to basal textbooks and workbooks. Opposite of this approach is for pupils to read widely from diverse literary materials including various genres and reading levels of materiels. The reading needs of individual pupils need to be provided for. Pupils need a variety of rich experiences in order to make better choices in the school/societal arenas. In reading library books, there should be an ample number on different categories of information as well as on diverse reading levels. Each pupil may then benefit from the many offerings of children's literature. Interest in reading is a powerful factor in helping pupils to achieve much in comprehending print discourse.

7. Exact answers are expected of pupils. when discussing content read. Rather, democracy stresses pupils engaging in higher levels of cognition. Why? Life in society emphasizes higher cognitive levels in order to solve personal and societal problems. Exact answers usually are factual, but much of life has to do with decision making which is complex and goes much beyond the memorizing and regurgitating of facts. Thus, facts need to be understood and placed in a meaningful context. Application of facts is very important. Otherwise knowledge for its own sake has little value. What is used needs to be analyzed into component parts to separate the useful from the not useful as well as the

accurate from the inaccurate. After, analysis, the learner should synthesize ideas that remain after the test of analyzing. Finally, evaluation of the process or product is important. The worth of the process/product needs to be determined (Ediger, 1988).

The reading supervisor then needs to assist teachers in moving toward democratic settings in the public schools. How can this difficult task be done? First, faculty members should be aided in perceiving purpose in studying democracy as a way of life in school and more specifically in the reading curriculum. Why? Teachers and pupils do better in the educational arena when there is respect, caring, and accepting of others. Too frequently, I see good readers look down upon the less proficient readers. The slow reader may ridicule the sophisticated terminology used by gifted pupils in ongoing lessons and units of study in reading. In numerous situations, pupils "put down" ideas presented by others during a discussion. There are pupils who snicker at ideas presented by a pupil in the classroom setting. Democracy is an ideal whereby teachers and pupils move from where they are presently in the school environment to some reasonable ideal in teaching and learning.

Criteria should be developed and evaluated pertaining to the meaning of democracy in the school setting. This is ongoing and continuous. The criteria may change as evidence warrants making these changes. Objectives in reading instruction should be based on democratic tenets. Thus, in the area of phonics instruction, both the teacher and the pupil need acceptance, respect, and a caring feeling. The teacher and the pupil will achieve more so if tenets of democracy are continuously planned and implemented within lessons and units of study. A relaxed learning environment should be an end result with more optimal learner achievement in reading (See Ediger, 1998, ERIC # ED 422085).

The reading supervisor then needs to establish objectives emphasizing democracy with involved individuals in the school setting. These cooperatively developed objectives provide the framework for goals to be obtained by all involved directly or indirectly in reading instruction. Attempts at realizing the objectives will be ongoing and continuous. The objectives stress ideals for professionals to attain in teaching and learning situations. Ideals cannot be achieved once and for all. Rather continuous efforts in goal attainment need to be in evidence. Evaluation by all involved should be ongoing and continuous to ascertain if the objectives are being realized (Ediger, Education Magazine, December,1994).

The Democratic Supervisor and Technology

A major trend in teaching reading is to integrate technology into the reading curriculum. The supervisor needs to be well versed in different kinds of software as well as criteria to use in evaluating these

products. Teachers need to be involved in choosing which software to adopt and purchase. Teachers need assistance in implementing quality software into ongoing lessons and units of study. Drill and practice, tutorial, diagnostic and remedial, simulation, and games software should become an inherent part of the reading curriculum. Sending messages by E mail, and using internet for research purposes should be experienced by all pupils when ready to participate.

CD ROMs may provide pupils with numerous illustrations, subject matter content, as well as interesting experiences.The reading supervisor should assist teachers and pupils to use and emphasize modern technology within the reading curriculum. A major goal of technology is to assist pupils to become better readers and to enjoy reading as a lifelong endeavor (See Cooper, 1997).

Conclusion

It is important for individuals to be able to work together harmoniously. This does not discredit creativity. Individuals need to be human relations orientated and this involves unique efforts being made toward becoming democratic in words and deeds. The reading supervisor and those teachers being supervised need to experience collaboration as a community of learners when processes and products of instruction are stressed. More can be accomplished in the teaching of reading if people involved are making headway toward respecting. caring, and helping other individuals. Pupils should achieve more optimally in reading if a democratic environment is in evidence. Pupils need to achieve relevant objectives in reading instruction. They must evaluate the self in order to achieve, grow, and develop. Ample input from pupils should be in the offing so that relevance can be stressed directly in the reading curriculum (Ediger, 1999, 50-56).

As a final statement, I would recommend strongly that school/university cooperation be implemented whereby individuals may learn from each other in an atmosphere of respect. A planned series of meetings may be held which stresses university/school partnerships in improving reading instruction in terms of practicums and field endeavors for reading teachers/supervisors as well as for university personnel. Shared leadership in improving the reading curriculum is a must!

(Ediger - - Education Magazine, September, 1994).

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